

Defence House
34 Bowen Street
Wellington, New Zealand

P +64 (04) 496 0999
E info@defence.govt.nz

PO Box 12703
Molesworth Street
Wellington 6144, New Zealand

www.defence.govt.nz



**MANATŪ KAUPAPA
WAONGA**
NEW ZEALAND
MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

19 May 2026

Joshua Riley
fyi-request-34619-01a1d130@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Joshua

RESPONSE YOUR OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT REQUEST

Thank you for your email of 6 May, in which you requested, pursuant to the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), responses to a series of questions relating to New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) training scenarios:

On Ministerial briefings and awareness

- 1. Has the Minister of Defence (currently Hon Chris Penk, and previously Hon Judith Collins) been briefed at any point — written or oral — about the VPF scenario, the SASO scenario developed by 2/1 RNZIR in August 2023, or the broader matter of religious or political identification of opposing forces in NZDF training scenarios? Please provide: a. Copies of any written briefings; b. The dates of any oral briefings; c. The titles and authors of those briefings.*
- 2. Has the Minister of Defence issued any Ministerial direction, statement of expectation, or letter of expectation to NZDF or the Ministry on the matter of cultural, religious, or political appropriateness in training scenarios? If so, please provide copies.*

On Ministry of Defence advice and oversight

- 1. Has the Ministry of Defence provided advice to the Minister of Defence, or to NZDF, on: a. The adoption of the DATE training environment by NZ Army in 2021; b. The use of religious, ethnic, or politically-identified opposing-force scenarios in training; c. The VPF scenario specifically, at any point since August 2023?*

If so, please provide copies of that advice.

- 1. Does the Ministry of Defence hold any policy, framework, or guideline governing the cultural, religious, or political appropriateness of training scenarios used by NZDF? If so, please provide a copy.*
- 2. If no such policy is held by the Ministry, please confirm that fact, and indicate whether the Ministry considers oversight of this matter to be its responsibility, NZDF's, or shared.*

On the internal review referred to by NZDF

1. NZDF's response of 5 February 2026 refers to an Army review that has directed the removal of non-DATE actors from training scenarios. Has the Ministry of Defence:
a. Been briefed on the existence, scope, or findings of that review? b. Received a copy of the review's report or directed outcome? c. Provided any input to the review?

If yes to any of these, please provide the relevant documents.

On correspondence

1. Please provide any correspondence, including emails, between the Ministry of Defence and NZDF between 1 December 2025 and the date of this request that refers to the VPF scenario, to "Christian extremist" training scenarios more generally, or to the OIA response of 5 February 2026 (OIA-2025-5622).
2. Please provide any correspondence between the Ministry of Defence and any other government agency (including but not limited to the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, the New Zealand Security Intelligence Service, or the Office of the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security) on the same subject matter and over the same period.

On the Christchurch context

1. The royal commission of inquiry into the 15 March 2019 terrorist attack on the Christchurch mosques made findings about the framing of threat in New Zealand's national security architecture. Does the Ministry of Defence hold any record of considering the implications of that report for NZDF training scenario design, in particular for scenarios involving religious, ethnic, or political opposing forces? If so, please provide.

The Ministry of Defence is a civilian agency that is responsible for the development of defence policy, international defence engagements and the delivery of major capability projects. The Ministry is not responsible for oversight of NZDF training scenarios and was not involved in this particular activity. No Ministry information has been identified as falling into the scope of your request, and it is declined under section 18(e) of the Act.

You note you have been in correspondence with the NZDF seeking information about this matter, and I understand you have put the same request to that agency. The NZDF continues to be best-placed to provide information regarding its training scenarios.

Under section 28(3) of the Act you have the right to request the Ombudsman to investigate and review this response.

Yours sincerely

Bronwyn Evans-Kent
Acting Deputy Secretary, Defence Policy and Planning